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AUTHOR	Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

To determine quality sequence in pupil progress, evaluation approaches need to be used which guide the teacher to assist learners to attain optimally. Teachers must use a variety of procedures to appraise student achievement in reading, because no one approach is adequate. Appraisal approaches might include: (1) observation and subsequent diagnosis in such areas as level of achievement, attitude, progress, and comprehension; (2) pupil self evaluation, through communicating content of reading selections to classmates or other self evaluation methods; (3) behavioral journals to measure learner achievement; (4) informal reading inventories (IRIs), which include samples from several grade levels, with appropriate level being decided by number of correct answers to questions and percentage of word recognition; (5) the cloze and maze methods, variations of IRI in which every fifth word of a selection is omitted and word identification and comprehension evaluation are simultaneous; and (6) standardized or teacher-written tests. (EF)

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Appraising Reading Achievement.

by Marlow Ediger

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M Ediger

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APPRAISING READING ACHIEVEMENT

The teacher must be a good evaluator of pupil progress in reading. Quality procedures of evaluation used by the teacher makes it possible to plan sequential learning activities for learners. Thus previous achievement provides opportunities for pupils to build upon what has been learned. Wholesome attitudes might well be developed by pupils if they are successful achievers in reading. Each goal attained provides a building block for the next level of attainment. How then might learner progress be evaluated?

Procedures of Evaluation

A variety of approaches should be used by the reading teacher since diverse facets of achievement must be analyzed and strategies of learning implemented. A professional reading teacher uses observational methods very frequently. He/she has quality standards to use which provide guidance in the evaluating process. Diagnosis is a key concept here. Thus if a pupil is weak in phonics or in syllabication skills, the reading reacher provides remediation. Or if a pupil cannot comprehend what has been read, the teacher assists the learner to concentrate on the task at hand to remember better that which has been read. A quality reading curriculum not only stresses comprehension but also higher levels of cognition such as learners thinking critically and creatively pertaining to what has been read. In addition, pupils must develop skills in problem solving. Why? Individuals need to be able to solve problems in school and in society. Problems continually are with us and they need relevant solutions.

Teachers should continually observe learner attitudes toward reading. Negative attitudes hinder optimal achievement in reading. Learners then need increased opportunities to choose their own individual reading materials such as trade books from the classroom and school libraries. Self selection of content to read can make it so the pupil reads what is of interest and possesses purpose. The teacher may

then appraise pupil involvement in reading on their own in school during spare time and noticing which learners take library books home to read. The teacher may arrange time to have a short conference with each pupil who has completed reading a book. Here the teacher will notice comprehension by pupils covering questions raised. Teachers must be avid readers of children's literature! Reading teachers may also have the pupil read a given selection orally within the library book. The teacher might then notice assistance a learner may need such as in using context clues in appropriate cases. If basal readers are used for the class as a whole, the teacher needs to observe the following;

1. word calling by pupils without attaching meaning to content being read.
2. not being able to make the necessary associations between symbols (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes).
3. comprehension being at a low level without being able to reflect and think about what has been read.
4. distractions from the task of reading occurring frequently.
5. not practicing the skills of reading during spare time or after school hours. Reading should be a truly enjoyable experience for learners.

The teacher then needs to be a good observer of pupil's reading progress in order to plan sequential activities in the curriculum. He/she also serves as a model for pupils in reading. Everyone in the classroom should read to themselves at a designated time during the school day. A short period of time such as fifteen minutes might be adequate. The teacher reveals that reading has worth and is enjoyable when pupils notice the former reads to the self and does not expect learners only to read. Each person in the classroom needs to select the reading materials for the fifteen minute periods of time for free reading.

There must be time available to share with others in the classroom what was read. Pupils may then discover books they would liked to read as a result of the sharing time. A bulletin board display can

be developed by pupils individually or in committees to reveal that which was comprehended. Pupils are fascinated with doing these displays in a creative manner.

There are numerous ways to show comprehension of content read to others. A student teacher (ST) supervised by the writer guided pupils to show meaningful subject matter read in different ways. One pupil pencil-sketched a scene from WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE by MAURICE SENDAK. The learner basically evaluated the sketch himself using self evaluation. He felt that the main character in the story did not show realness and reality in the pencil sketch. The reasoning presented was that the wild things were to be drawn in a highly creative and imaginary manner but the boy was a life-like person in the story. The learner was able to give excellent supporting ideas for the completed drawing. Comprehension of content is then indicated when evaluating the pencil sketch with ST guidance. The ST assisted three pupils who had read the same book entitled IS THAT REALLY ME IN THE MIRROR? by MARILYN LEVY to pantomime its contents. These pupils realized how difficult it was to use no spoken words to show understanding of the book read. One student who played the role of Joanne, the main character in the story, found it difficult to role play being shy, resentful, and self-conscious due to having a long nose. The pupil playing the role of her sister had a rather easy time pantomiming feelings of popularity and confidence. As a result of negative feelings toward her long nose, Joanne cultivated friendships with a less popular group in school as compared to her popular sister. Other leaners in the classroom assisted the three pupils to pantomime the less popular group to whom Joanne related rather well. Preplanning of the different roles made it possible for those who had not read IS THAT REALLY ME IN THE MIRROR? to feel knowledgeable of their parts in the presentation. After Joanne's plastic surgery on the nose, the role player felt much more comfortable in pantomiming positive feelings that she (Joanne) had toward peers. The surprising part of the story was that Joanne decided to keep her old friends who were less popular. She could have made friends with the

popular group following the plastic surgery. Pupils made several comments in appraising their progress when pantomiming. These were the following;

1. It would have helped the pantomime if all had read the trade book. Thus the pupils who role played the popular as well as the unpopular group of learners could have identified better with their feelings toward others.

2. More practice is necessary in pantomiming content since gestures, facial expressions, and body movements replace all spoken words.

3. A better job of presenting ideas would be possible through creative dramatics. Here spoken words are used along with non-verbal means of communication.

The ST assisted in brain storming ways of revealing what had been learned from reading library books. The writer marveled about the knowledge that pupils have of evaluating their own progress in reading. Ways mentioned by learners included the following;

1. Discussing with others content learned through reading.

2. Making a mural of important ideas. A committee had developed a mural previously in the social studies unit on THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT.

3. Writing play parts for a formal dramatics presentation.

4. Interviewing a character in the book read. Pupils discussed this item when referring to IS THIS REALLY ME IN THE MIRROR/ Joanne, the main character, could have been interviewed by the other two pupils who had read the same book (see above).

5. Writing a letter to the author. One pupil had done this a few years ago when writing to Dr. Suess after having read his book THE FIVE HUNDRED HATS OF BARTHOLOMEW CUBBINS.

6. Outlining the book read. Pupils had recently studied outlining from a social studies unit on " The Civil War and Its Aftermath" using content in the basal text.

7. Writing main ideas gleaned from reading.

8. Giving an oral report to the class using a self-drawn illustration to clarify selected points in the story.

9. Completing a diorama on the plot of the story.

10. Drawing a map that shows the setting of the completed library book.

Cooperating teachers supervised by the writer frequently state the values of using behavioral journals in appraising learner achievement in reading. Cooperating teachers (CT's) generally are very helpful in guiding ST's to write entries in the behavioral journal. One CT wrote the following concise statements to appraise a learner's performance in reading;

October 11- Bill could not identify the words --- cabbage and cotton.

October 13-Bill has difficulties recognizing words that begin with the letter "c." These words included ---- cough and capable.

Even with these two entries, the reading teacher perceives a pattern experienced by the learner in word recognition. If behavioral journal entries are written for two or three pupils each day, it does not take long before the rounds are made for all pupils in the classroom. The information is recorded and readily available to the teacher to use in improving the reading curriculum for each pupil through remediation. By continually recording learner behavior in reading, the teacher will notice the many ways that pupils can be guided to achieve more optimally. Behavioral journal entries are for teacher use only, not for permanent records of any one learner. Unless the teacher records what learners have and have not attained, the reading teacher may forget or be somewhat hazy on that which needs to be presented sequentially. Items recorded should follow the following standards;

1. brief statements, not lengthy discourse is desired.
2. clarity of ideas written is of utmost importance.
3. diagnostic and developmental reading must be stressed in

written statements.

4. objective content needs to bee recorded, not subjective statements.

5. loaded terminology should not be used, rather the written ideas are based on actual occurrences.

To determine reading achievement levels, the teacher may use an informal reading inventory (IRI). The IRI consists of samples of reading materials from several grade levels. Thus, content from the presently used basal reader series might well be used as an IRI. Each grade level of reading material used should be representative for that respective level of instruction. For example, a third grade pupil at the beginning of the school year may be expected to read from the third grade basal reader adopted by the school or school district. The question arises as to what is the level of reading attainment for that pupil. To determine this using an IRI, the teacher uses samples of content from a second, third, fourth, and fifth grade basal reader. Perhaps, 100 running words from each of the books for the respective grade level may be used. As an estimate, if a pupil can answer three out of four questions correctly covering the content read as well as identify seventy- five per cent of the words correctly when reading orally to the teacher, the IRI selection will be on his/her reading level. If a child reads and pronounces every word correctly as well as answers all questions correctly covering content read, the subject matter is on his/her recreational level off reading, rather than the instructional level. If a pupil identifies fewer than seventy- five per cent of the words correctly and answers less than three of the four questions correctly, the book read will be on the frustrational level. These are not absolute figures but aid in determining which book(s) are on the instructional level of reading for the involved learner. To frequently, pupils are reading from basals which are too complex to understand or contain an excess number of difficult words.
The opposite may also occur in which the book read is too easy for pupils and may result in boredom when reading its contents.

In using IRI's, other pupils should not listen in when one child is being evaluated through oral reading to the teacher. If they do listen in, the listener will have gotten some help in identifying words and answers to questions that he/she will not receive ordinarily in every day lessons in reading instruction. The teacher should start with an IRI that is below the instructional level of reading and then proceed to more difficult selections until the instructional level is realized or its approximation. Variations of the IRI may be used to determine reading levels of learners. The cloze method stresses every fifth word be deleted in a 250 word reading selection. For the book to be on the reading level of learners, the involved learner needs to pronounce correctly 44 to 57 per cent of the running words carefully from the basal reader used in the classroom. The close method attempts to measure both word identification and comprehension at the same time. The following are provided as additional suggestions for using the cloze method;

1. leave the first five words or so intact before omitting a word.
2. use the basal reader presently being used to emphasize the cloze method of determining reading levels of pupils.
3. attempt to establish good relations with the learner before using the cloze procedure.

A third method of attempting to ascertain reading levels of pupils is to emphasize the maze method. As was true of the cloze, the maze method also emphasizes omitting every fifth word in context from the basal reader presently being used. Pupils then read the 250 word selection and the teacher marks how many words the learner was not able to identify. Instead of blank spaces for the omitted words, the maze method stresses that there be a multiple choice approach for the pupil to choose from among three alternatives as to which is the correct word that was omitted. As was true of the cloze method, pupils also read the 250 word selection orally to the teacher who has chosen the content. Since more clues are available in the maze, as compared to the cloze method, the pupil should be able to identify correctly 90 per cent of the words correctly in oral reading. The maze method combines word recognition

and comprehension in the same operation of oral reading to the teacher.

When using IRI's, cloze, and maze methods to determine reading levels of individual pupils, the following need to be kept in mind;

1. these are informal approaches to assessing reading levels of learners and should be used along with other procedures, such as the teacher observing on a daily basis how well the learner is achieving, when making selections as to which reading materials would best benefit any one learner.

2. the pupil being evaluated to determine his/her reading level should be in a private area where other learners cannot listen in on the content being read or discussed. Otherwise, listeners obtain information
that does not guide in determining reading levels.

3. No learner should have had previous experience in reading the selection to be tested upon. The selection is new and unfamiliar to the pupil.

There are standardized tests, such as The Gilmore Oral Reading Test, to use in attempting to determine reading levels of pupils. The writer favors using the informal methods more so than the standardized tests since the former stresses the use of content from basal readers which pupils generally will be reading from in the curriculum. There are teachers, however, who believe strongly in using a standardized reading test to determine present reading levels of pupils. These teachers feel that the standardized test is a quicker and more accurate way of determining reading levels as compared to informal procedures. Time and money has been spent by companies in developing standardized tests. Manuals related directly to the standardized reading test give precise directions for administration and interpretation of test results.

Additional methods to use in appraising learner progress in reading include;

1. standardized achievement tests such as The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and state mandated objectives and criterion referenced tests. There are no objectives that teachers may stress which relate directly or even indirectly to items contained in a standardized test. Thus validity is lacking when learners take a standardized achievement test. Learners then have had no opportunities to learn content, skills, and ideas that should be contained in objectives relating to the test. However, standardized tests may be one approach along with others in evaluating pupil progress. The teacher may compare pupil's test results with that of the norm group upon which the achievement test was standardized. Criterion referenced tests do contain objectives that go along with the test. Thus, the teacher might feel more secure in teaching toward objectives that reflect rather directly to items contained in the test. Validity may well be in evidence here.

2. teacher written test items such as true- false, matching, multiple choice, completion, and essay. Clearly written and valid test items provide the reading teacher information on how well pupils are doing in learning to read more proficiently. Face validity is in evidence if the teacher tests on what has been taught and the test items posses clarity.

In Closing

Teachers must use a variety of procedures to appraise pupil achievement in reading. No one approach is adequate. To determine quality sequence in pupil progress, an approach in evaluation needs to be used which guides the teacher to assist learners to attain optimally. When pupils achieve well in reading, the self concept should improve and positive feelings accrue toward reading and toward life itself. A good reading teacher is a good evaluator of pupil progress.